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ABSTRACT

This study investigated whether certain broad cultural notions, such as "chiao shun" (training children in appropriate behavior or morals) and "guan" (a positive notion expressing parental concern, caring, or involvement) better distinguish the Chinese parent from the European-American than do the concepts of "authoritarian" and "restrictive." Subjects, 50 immigrant English-speaking Chinese mothers mostly from Taipei, Taiwan with preschool children and 50 European-American mothers with preschool-aged children in the west Los Angeles area, completed parental control, authoritarian, and authoritative scales derived from Block's Child Rearing Practices Report. Subjects also completed demographic and background measures and a 13-item child-training questionnaire that focused on two areas: ideologies on child development and learning, and ideologies on the mother-child relationship. This questionnaire was developed from concepts of "chiao shun" and "guan." Results showed that the Chinese scored significantly higher than the European-Americans on measures for parental control and authoritarian parenting style, but not for the authoritative parenting style. The Chinese mothers also showed pronounced differences on the concept of "training." This finding indicates that the concept of training has distinctive features that more adequately describe the Chinese beyond the authoritarian concept, because the authoritarian concept has evolved from a sociocultural context that differs from Chinese culture. (MM)

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Clarification of the Authoritarian Parenting Style and Parental Control: Cultural Concepts of Chinese Child Rearing

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Paper Presented at the 60th Anniversary Meeting of the

Society for Research in Child Development

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Clarification of the Authoritarian Parenting Style and Parental Control: Cultural Concepts of Chinese Child Rearing

This study proposes that the concepts often used to describe Chinese parenting (i.e., "authoritarian", "controlling", or "restrictive") have been rather ethnocentric and misleading. Scoring high on "authoritarian" and "controlling" may have entirely different implications for Chinese than for European-Americans due to their different cultural systems. These concepts are embedded in a cultural "tradition" for European-Americans that Chinese do not necessarily share. While the focus of this study is on the Chinese, this review of the research has been broadened to include Asians in general since Chinese have some commonalities with Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, etc. (i.e., similar values around Confucius principles such as respect for elders, emphasis on the family). Descriptions of Chinese parenting present somewhat of a paradox, particularly for predicting children's school achievement: The study by Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) provides an explicit example of this paradox. They asked high school students (i.e., African-, Mexican-, Asian-, and European-American) to score their own parents according to the three parental control styles originally derived by Baumrind (1971)-- "authoritative", "authoritarian", and "permissive". The Asian student sample rated their parents higher on the authoritarian style (i.e., reflecting unquestioning obedience to parents), and lower on the more "optimal" authoritative style (i.e., reflecting parental expectations for mature behavior and encouragement of open two-way communications between parents and children), the opposite of the European-American

student sample. Therefore, across the sample as a whole, Asians were the highest on the authoritarian parenting style, but they had the highest grade point averages. Dornbusch et al. concluded that, "Asian children in our public schools cannot be adequately explained in terms of the parenting styles we have studied".

In a large follow-up study to Dornbusch et al. (1987), Steinberg et al. (1992) proposed, as a resolution to this paradox, these parenting styles as well as parental influences were not appropriate predictors of school success for Asian youngsters. They found that the parental influences were effective in predicting school success among White and Hispanic youngsters, whereas the peer influences were more effective for Asian youngsters. For these researchers to stress the peer influence is important and informative. However, to conclude that Asian parental influences are not as important for predicting school success may be too hasty. Instead, this paradox may be explained by the fact that the parenting concepts, "authoritarian" and "restrictive", are not very relevant for Asians, although they may be important for understanding European-American parenting. Indeed, these concepts are more pertinent to American parenting, or of American values in which "strictness" is sometimes equated with manifestations of parental hostility, aggression, mistrust, and dominance (Kim & Choi, in press; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985). For Asians, parental obedience and some aspects of strictness may be equated with parental concern, caring, or involvement. For instance, as Tobin, Wu, and Davidson (1987) explain, the notion of "guan" for Chinese means literally "to govern", but guan has a very positive connotation in China because it can mean "to care for" or even

"to love" as well as "to govern". Therefore, Tobin et al. (1987) clarify that parental concern, care, and involvement are synonymous with a firm control and governance of the child. Thus, the concepts of "authoritarian" and "restrictive" may have very different implications when considered in light of the culture, and may not be as useful for understanding Asian parenting. Therefore, this study offers an alternative concept (i.e., "chiao shun" or "training") derived directly from an appreciation of Asian culture.

Often, the term "child training" has been used synonymously for "child rearing" by many East-Asian scholars (Ho & Kang, 1984; Wu, 1985). "Chiao shun" is a Chinese term that contains the idea of teaching/educating children in the appropriate or expected behaviors or morals. Wu and Tseng (1985) stress that a central part of training focuses on the ability of children to perform well in school: "In the family, Chinese parents pay special attention to training children to adhere to socially desirable and culturally approved behavior. One way to measure the success of parental intervention is the ability of children to perform well in school" (p. 11).

Training children also involves an immense devotion and sacrifice on the part of the mother. In the child's early years, the mother provides an extremely nurturing environment for the child by being physically available, and by promptly attending to the child's every need (Wu, 1985; Young, 1972). When children reach school age, the mother provides the support and drive for them to achieve in school, and to ultimately meet the societal and familial expectations for success. This training then takes place in the context of a supportive, highly involved, and physically close mother-child relationship.

To explain Chinese- or Asian-American school success using Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles would not be adequate because Baumrind's conceptualizations are specific only to European-American culture, or European-American individuals . Other indigenous concepts capturing parenting style must be offered and also tested for their relevancy to Chinese or Asian culture. Therefore, this study investigated whether other important broad cultural notions, such as "chiao shun" and "guan", distinguish the Chinese from the European-Americans beyond the concepts of "authoritarian" and "restrictive". The following hypotheses were tested: (1) Immigrant Chinese mothers score significantly higher than the European-American mothers on the standard measures of parental control as well as authoritarian parenting style; (2) however, in addition, the Chinese also score significantly higher on the Chinese child rearing ideologies; and (3) after taking into account, or controlling for, both groups of mothers' parental control scores and their scores on the authoritative and authoritarian measures, the Chinese score significantly higher than the European-Americans on the Chinese child rearing ideologies reflected by the notions of "chiao shun" and "guan".

Method

Sample

Fifty immigrant Chinese mothers mostly from Taipei, Taiwan were recruited from preschools in the greater Los Angeles areas. All of the Chinese mothers immigrated here as adults (i.e., 19 years was the youngest age at immigration). These mothers were English-speaking, upper middle class, and fairly well educated with at least a bachelor's

degree (i.e, the mean number of years of education was 16.58). Their children were preschool-aged, ranging from 2 to 5 years with a mean of 3.72 years. There were 27 girls and 23 boys.

Fifty European-American mothers of at least the third generation with preschool-aged children, and were recruited from various preschools in the west Los Angeles area. All of these mothers were also upper middle class and fairly well educated. However, their mean number of years of education ($M = 17.76$) was significantly higher than the Chinese, $t(1,99) = 2.64$, $p < .01$. Their children ranged in age from 2 to 5 years with a mean of 3.88 years, not significantly different from the Chinese, $p > .365$. The numbers of European-American boys and girls (i.e., 26 and 24, respectively) were very close to the Chinese numbers, also a nonsignificant difference, $p > .05$. The figures from these demographic data analyses are provided in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Measures and Procedures

Block's Child Rearing Practices Report

After collecting demographic or background information, scales derived from Block's (1981) Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) were administered in English: the parental control factor (Lin & Fu, 1990), and the authoritative and authoritarian scales (Kochanska, 1990). Some examples of the items from the parental control factor

were "I have strict, well-established rules for my child", and "I believe that scolding and criticism helps my child". Scale scores for parental control were derived by adding all the scores in the individual items, just as Lin and Fu (1990) had done.

The authoritarian scale consisted of the factors, Authoritarian Control (identical to the parental control factor used by Lin & Fu, 1990), Supervision of the Child, and Control by Anxiety. Refer to Table 2 for a listing of the individual items that comprise these factors.

Insert Table 2 about here

The authoritative scale consisted of the factors, Encouragement of Independence, Expression of Affection, and Rational Guidance. Refer to Table 3 for a listing of the individual items that comprise these factors. These were all factors originally derived by Block (1981). However, the specific factors used to comprise the authoritative and authoritarian dimensions were conceptually derived by Kochanska (1990), and are consistent with Baumrind's conceptualizations: Authoritarian comprises high demands and firm enforcement without democratic give-and-take, and parental support or warmth, and the authoritative comprises high demands and firm enforcement with both democratic give-and-take as well as fostering the child's independence, and parental support. The same 5-point Likert-type scale used by both Lin and Fu (1990) and Kochanska (1990) was used in this study (i.e., each item was rated on a scale ranging

from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Insert Table 3 about here

The "Training" Questionnaire Items

Thirteen "training" questionnaire items were then administered by the researcher in English. The same 5-point Likert-type scale described above was used. The training questionnaire covered two areas, "ideologies on child development and learning" (involving 7 items), and "ideologies on the mother-child relationship" (involving 6 items) that were derived from the concepts of "chiao shun" or training, and "guan", discussed earlier. The first area has been derived from the literature on Chinese child rearing and involves the following items: (1) the nature of the child as inherently good (Kojima, 1986; Ho & Kang, 1984); (2) the earliest possible introduction of training (Ho, 1986); (3) the promotion of training through exposing the young child as much as possible to the adult world (Ho, 1989; Wu, 1985), and (4) through explicit example, or comparison to other children (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson, 1989). The second area, "ideologies on the mother-child relationship" has also been derived from the literature and involves such statements as the child being in constant care of the mother, being taken everywhere with the mother, sleeping with the mother, being the sole interest and concern of the mother (Wu, 1985), and the mother making great sacrifice for the education of her child (Stevenson and Lee, 1990; Ho, 1986; Wu & Tseng, 1985).

Results

Ethnic Differences on the Standard Measures & Chinese Child Rearing Ideologies

The findings reported by Lin and Fu (1990) for parental control were replicated in this study. A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether the Chinese would score significantly higher on the parental control factor, refer to the first part of Table 4. The results indicate that the Chinese were indeed significantly higher ($M = 24.00$) than the European-American mothers ($M = 15.24$) on parental control, $F(1,99) = 86.52$, $p < .001$.

Insert Table 4 about here

Another univariate ANOVA was used to test whether the Chinese mothers would also score significantly higher on the authoritarian scale, refer to the second portion of Table 4. Again, the Chinese mothers were significantly higher ($M = 39.90$) than the European-American mothers ($M = 25.68$) on the authoritarian scale, $F(1,99) = 136.77$, $p < .001$. However, the Chinese mothers ($M = 63.26$) were not significantly higher than the European-American mothers ($M = 62.92$) on the authoritative scale, $p > .63$, refer to the third portion of Table 4. This finding for the authoritative scale indicates that Chinese mothers do not simply have a greater propensity to score high on everything.

In addition, another univariate ANOVA was conducted on the mothers' mean scores for the Chinese child rearing ideologies to test whether the Chinese mothers

would endorse these items more than the European-American mothers, refer to the last portion of Table 4. Again, the Chinese mothers scored significantly higher (M=57.62) than the European-American mothers (M=44.14) on the Chinese child rearing ideologies, $F(1,99)=100.30$, $p<.001$.

Differences on the Chinese Child Rearing Ideologies After Controlling for their Authoritarian/Authoritative Scores

Both groups of mothers' authoritarian and authoritative scale scores, and their education were controlled for to test whether the Chinese mothers would still score significantly higher than the European-American mothers on the Chinese child rearing ideologies. A one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted using the covariates, the authoritarian and authoritative scale scores, and the mother's number of years of education. Because there was a significant difference found for mothers' number of years of education, this was also controlled for and included as another covariate. In this MANCOVA, the mother's ethnicity was used as the groups to analyze the 13 Chinese child rearing ideology items. The multivariate tests yielded significant effects for ethnicity after controlling for the covariates, mentioned above, $F(13,83)=5.19$, $p<.000$.

For the post-hoc analyses, separate univariate analyses of variance were conducted on each of the 13 items. Significant ($p\leq.05$) ethnic differences were found on 8 of the 13 Chinese child rearing items with the Chinese mothers scoring higher on all but one of the 13 items. The means and standard deviations for each item by the mothers' ethnicity

are presented in Table 5. Referring to the ideologies of child development and learning,

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Insert Table 5 about here

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the Chinese scored significantly higher than the European-American mothers on the asterisked items listed in the first half of Table 5. Referring to the ideologies of the mother-child relationship, the Chinese also scored significantly higher on the asterisked items listed in the second half of Table 5. On the item "children should be able to be with their mothers and taken on errands, social calls, and social and family gatherings", the European-American mothers were significantly higher than the Chinese.

Discussion

Just as past studies had shown (Steinberg, et al., 1992; Lin and Fu, 1990; Dornbusch et al., 1987), the Chinese were significantly higher than the European-Americans on the standard measures for parental control, and authoritarian parenting style, but not the authoritative parenting style. They were also significantly higher on the Chinese child rearing ideologies, just as predicted. Also, as predicted, even when accounting for both groups of mothers' scores on authoritarian, authoritative, and education, the Chinese have important pronounced differences from the European-Americans on the concept of "training". This finding indicates that this concept has distinctive features that more adequately describe the Chinese beyond the authoritarian concept, because this concept has evolved from a sociocultural context that Chinese are

not part of.

The "authoritarian" concept has evolved from an American culture and psychology that is rooted in both the evangelical and Puritan religious influences. Both these religious movements throughout the 1700 and into the 1800's shared an intense concern for the spiritual destiny of their children that resulted in the harsh treatment of children. Both the notions of "original sin" (i.e., the concept of guilt attached to the infant by reason of deprivation of his original nature) and "breaking the child's will" constituted the views of early American child rearing. This movement was claimed to have dominated both the advisory literature available to parents, and the children's own reading for up to two centuries (Morgan & Vinovski, 1985). Most historians in child development recognize that following World War II, there was a distinct shift from authoritarian to more permissive modes of child rearing emphasizing a more "child centered" and democratic approach. Because the permissive movement in child rearing was most evidently a backlash against the harsh, ambivalent treatment of children, the authoritarian concept received even more "notoriety" as the antithesis to the more "modern", democratic, and individualistic approach. Although in developmental psychology Baumrind is recognized for her conceptualization of "authoritarian", this idea has been a fundamental preoccupation throughout American history, and thus is part of a larger context than the discipline of developmental psychology.

These highly-charged negative "derivations" of authoritarian have been applied to describe the parenting styles of individuals who in no way share this same historical

sociocultural context. Scoring high on measures of "authoritarian" could not have the same meaning for Chinese as it could for European-Americans who have experienced this sociocultural context. Perhaps, for Chinese scoring high on the "authoritarian" parenting style may indicate something somewhat akin to their concepts of "chiao shun" and "guan", because both "authoritarian" and "chiao shun" accord parents with an authority that stresses a set standard of conduct. However, as the results indicate, even when both groups of mothers were, in a sense, "matched" on their authoritarian scores, there were still important differences apparent between both groups of mothers on the Chinese concepts. In other words, for the Chinese, the concept of training still holds some distinctive meaning that is not part of the authoritarian concept.

One distinctive feature of this concept of training for the Chinese involves the role or responsibility acquired to the mother to be highly involved, caring, and concerned. Specifically, Chinese mothers in comparison to European-American mothers endorsed (1) a high level of maternal involvement for promoting success in the child, (2) being the sole or central caretaker of the child, and (3) having the child physically close to the mother by sleeping with the mother. Therefore, the concept of training includes a type of high involvement, and physical closeness that may not be a central part of the authoritarian concept, and is quite distinctive of the Chinese.

On the other hand, European-Americans do not share the sociocultural traditions and values of the Chinese that have shaped the perspectives of "chiao shun" or "training" for child rearing. For the European-American mothers in this study, the word "training"

itself often evoked associations such as "militaristic", "regimented", or "strict" that were interpreted as being very negative; whereas for the Chinese mothers this word did not evoke such associations, and was instead interpreted to mean a stricter or more rigorous "teaching", "educating", or "inculcating" that was regarded as being very positive. Because this concept of training has also evolved from a sociocultural tradition that is not shared by European-Americans, this concept would also not be relevant for these individuals.

Thus, both the concepts of "chiao shun" and "authoritarian" have their own sociocultural "traditions" that have shaped how these concepts are defined. When these concepts are taken out of their sociocultural context and applied to individuals of differing traditions, they can be quite misleading. In fact, the parenting style paradox found for the outcome of Asian school achievement is just one example. The findings by Dornbusch et al. (1987) and Steinberg et al. (1992) are important and telling in that the strength of the positive relationship between the optimal parenting style (i.e., authoritative), and school achievement for European-Americans is, on the other hand, quite weak or unclear for Asians.

The findings in the present study indicate that the global parenting concept of training or "chiao shun" should be explored in future studies that include Asians. Further studies must also explore how this concept of training is related to other indicators of maternal behavior such as involvement in the child's schooling, or to family variations such as acculturation level. This parenting concept must also then be tested against the outcome of school achievement to explain the Asian paradox found by Dornbusch et al.

(1987).

Ultimately, researchers must be able to appreciate and be aware of how the larger theoretical frameworks or disciplines that they adhere to are also influenced by culture. The developmental psychology framework is greatly influenced by a North American "psychology", or culture that has been immensely preoccupied with "individualism" and "independence", stressing freedom, individual choice and self-expression, separateness, and uniqueness. In order to offer conceptualizations for describing individuals from other cultures or sociocultural contexts, researchers must not simply offer reformulated or alternative conceptualizations from within the same theoretical discipline or framework. Because the developmental psychology framework in the United States represents a more individualist perspective, this framework would not be useful for formulating conceptualizations that are intended to be applied to individuals from other cultures. More culturally-viable concepts can be offered from a framework based on an indigenous or native appreciation of culture, for example, the Chinese culture that emphasizes a much less individualistic interpretation of childhood socialization and development. This study is important, because it offers more than just a reformulation of Baumrind's parenting styles relevant to Asians. Instead, this study offers indigenous concepts that were formulated entirely outside of North American psychology: The Chinese concepts were derived from a cultural framework emphasizing Confucius traditions consisting of the role responsibilities for maintaining harmonious relations with others.

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Table 1. Ethnic Differences Versus Similarities in Demographics With Means, T-values, and Significance levels

Demographic Variable	Means	T-Value	Significance Level
Mother's # years of educat.		-2.64	.01
Chinese	16.58		
Euro-American	17.76		
Mother's education level		-2.99	.003
Chinese	3.10		
Euro-American	3.66		
Child's age		-.91	.365
Chinese	3.72		
Euro-American	3.88		
Number of older siblings		.96	.341
Chinese	.52		
Euro-Americans	.40		
Number of younger siblings		-1.82	.072
Chinese	.26		
Euro-Americans	.44		

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Table 2. Factors Used by Kochanska For the Authoritarian Dimension

Authoritarian Control

I have strict, well-established rules for my child.

I believe children should not have secrets from their parents.

I believe that scolding and criticism helps my child.

I believe that a child should be seen and not heard.

I do not allow my child to say bad things about his/her teacher.

I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining.

I teach my child to keep control of his/her feelings at all times.

I do not allow my child to question my decisions.

I do not allow my child to get angry with me.

Supervision of child (SUPERV)
I make sure I know where my child is and what he is doing at all times.

I believe it is unwise to let children play a lot by themselves without supervision from grown-ups.

Control by anxiety induction (CNTANX)
I teach my child that in one way or another punishment will find him when he is bad.

I control my child by warning him about the bad things that can happen to him.

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Table 3. Factors Used By Kochanska For the Authoritative Dimension

Encouragement of independence (ENCIND)

I respect my child's opinions.

I usually take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.

I encourage my child to be independent of me.

I teach my child that he/she is responsible for what happens to him/her.

I give my child a good many duties and responsibilities.

Expression of affection items (EXPRES)

When I am angry with my child I let him/her know it.

I am easygoing and relaxed with my child.

I joke and play with my child.

My child and I have warm intimate times together.

I express affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child.

I feel a child should be given comfort and understanding when he/she is scared or upset.

Rational guiding of child (RATINL)

I talk it over and reason with my child when he misbehaves.

I believe in praising a child when he is good and think it gets better results than punishing him when he is bad.

I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what he tries or accomplishes.

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Table 4. Univariate Results on Authoritarian & Authoritative Scales & Chinese Child Rearing Ideologies Involving "Training"

	Means	F-Value	Significance Level
Parental Control		86.52	.001
Chinese	24.00		
Euro-American	15.24		
Authoritarian		136.77	.001
Chinese	39.90		
Euro-American	25.68		
Authoritative		n.s.	.630
Chinese	63.26		
Euro-American	62.92		
"Training" Items		100.30	.001
Chinese	57.62		
Euro-American	44.14		

Table 5.

Means and Standard Deviations of Each Item for Chinese and Euro-Americans

	Chinese		Euro-American	
Ideologies of Child Development & Learning	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Children are by nature born good	3.60	1.23	3.96	1.31
*Parents must begin training as soon as children are ready	4.48	.71	2.30	1.30
Children can improve in almost anything they work very hard	4.32	.87	3.90	.95
*Mothers must train to work very hard & be disciplined	3.96	.99	2.36	1.12
*Mothers can teach children by pointing good behavior in other children	4.04	1.07	2.12	1.32
The best way children learn how to behave is to be around adults	3.16	1.23	2.20	.88
*When children continue to disobey you, they deserve a spanking	3.22	1.18	1.48	.97
Ideologies of the Mother-Child Relationship				
*Mothers primarily express love by helping child to succeed, esp. in school	4.04	.95	2.24	1.13
A mother's sole interest is in taking care of her child	2.68	1.24	1.98	1.13
*Children should be in the constant care of their mothers/family members	4.00	1.05	2.26	1.24
Mothers should do everything for ch education & be willing to make many sacrifices	4.06	1.00	3.56	.99
*Children should be allowed to sleep in their mother's bed	3.16	1.13	2.76	1.36
*Children should be able to be w/mothers & taken on errands & social gatherings	4.00	.81	4.42	.76

* indicates significant differences at $p<.05$